

CLEAN PRUNING IN THE MID COUNTRY

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The type of clean pruning which was recently introduced on Kirimetiya Estate, Galaha, comprised removal of one third to half of the damaged large branches per bush. Pruning saws were used to remove such branches as near to the collar as possible. Lungs were left in almost all the bushes, except in a few due to the carelessness of the pruners. The deaths of whole bushes after pruning were not more than the usual number after the more normal pruning which had been carried out on this estate previously. Where deaths have taken place it is invariably in bushes where no lungs were left.

The lowest elevation at which this type of pruning was done is 2,200 feet, and highest 4,300 feet. The soil of most of the fields pruned in this manner is gravelly or sandy and loose. The bushes were thin, having been weakened by shot hole borer attack in the lower fields and stripped by strong winds in the upper fields. Although gliricidia and grevillea have been planted on an intensive scale, they have not yet sufficiently developed to provide the cover necessary for soil protection. Where fields are windblown I would suggest that this type of pruning be done during the monsoon period when the bushes will have sufficient moisture to make a recovery. Also, newly-formed branches will be sufficiently developed to stand against the strong wind in the following monsoon. If it is done during drought conditions more deaths are likely to occur.

The recovery is rather slow, but satisfactory, six or seven months elapsing before the shoots spread out to produce plucking points. I took this opportunity to prune on the slope so that a good slope plucking table is formed. Very careful plucking has to be done in the early stages to allow for the development of good healthy branches and frame. I expect to have good and clean new branches when the next pruning is due. My pruning cycle is at present three years, but I believe that on fields where this clean pruning has been done I could easily extend the cycle to four years, with sufficient cultivation and fertiliser.

I was very nervous to adopt this type of pruning when recommended by my Visiting Agent, but from observation of the recovery made and of the new shoots coming out from the base of the bush, I am more than satisfied. Of course, the crops have been poor during the first few months but they are now catching up, and I have reason to believe that the crop for this pruning cycle will be considerably more than in the previous cycle, when normal pruning was done. I am applying fertilisers in anticipation of the crop, every three to four months. There has not yet been sufficient time to give comparative crop figures.

I have been able to do dieldrin spraying on two whole fields where this pruning was done; wet weather interfered with the programme on a third field, part of which was not sprayed.